

Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan Implementation

Conversation with Buy Locals

Wednesday, September 11th at 2:30pm. Online

Katharine Otto, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator



Agenda and Today's Goals

Agenda

- ❖ Introductions (5 mins)
- ❖ Context (20 mins)
 - ❖ Farming in Massachusetts today and looking forwards
 - ❖ Importance of Farmland Action Plan
 - ❖ Implementing the Farmland Action Plan
- ❖ How could Buy Locals get involved? (60 mins)
- ❖ Next steps (5 mins)

Today's Goals

- ❖ Explore how MDAR and Buy Locals can collaborate and coordinate

Context

Farming in Massachusetts today

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Massachusetts has:

**7,083 farms on
464,451 acres**



of farmland (about 9% of MA land) with
land and buildings worth

\$6.4 billion

13,896 producers* and
14,032 hired farm workers

with a payroll of

\$204 million



**\$607
million**

of agricultural
products
sold



* A “producer” is a person who is involved in making decisions for the farm operation

What does the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture (MDAR) do?

Mission



Cultivate a robust and equitable agricultural economy



Promote a safe and resilient food system



Preserve a healthy environment for Massachusetts farmers, animals, and consumers.

Areas of expertise

- ❖ Land preservation
- ❖ Farm business planning
- ❖ Urban agriculture
- ❖ Farmers markets and Agricultural fairs
- ❖ Crop and Pest Services
- ❖ Compost
- ❖ Animal Health
- ❖ Food Systems
- ❖ And more!

Why are farms
and farmland
important to you?

Feeds
community

????

Contributes
to local
economy

Preserves
rural
heritage

????

Grow
foods from
my cultural
heritage

????

Helps
address
climate
change and
mitigate its
impacts

Sustains
family
businesses

Protects
vital
natural
resources

Contributes
to soil
health

???

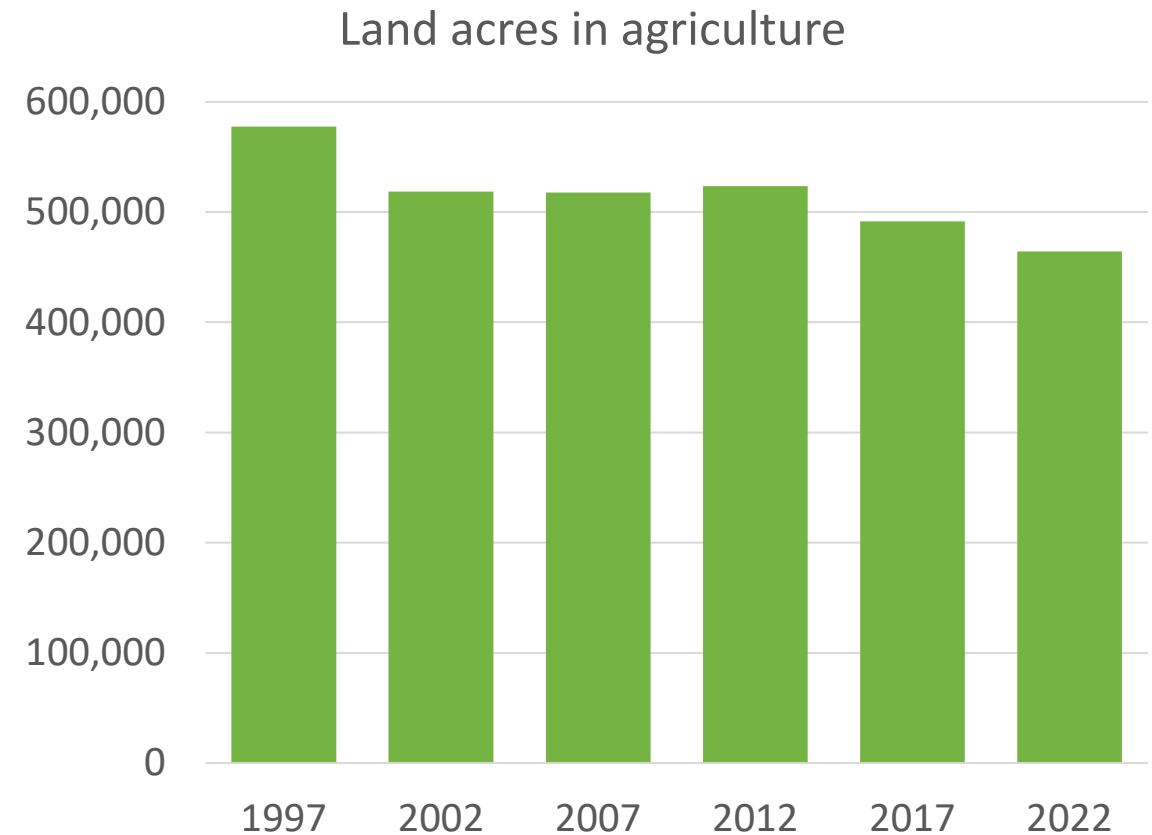
Why is the Farmland Action Plan important?

We are losing agricultural land fast!

Between 1997 and 2022

Massachusetts lost 113,000 acres

- 3.7 times the size of the land area of Boston
- 1.8 times the size of Martha's Vineyard
- 12.4 acres per day



Source: Census of Agriculture 2022 and earlier. Table 1

www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Massachusetts/

Farms Under Threat

American Farmland Trust's "Farms Under Threat 2040" Report, between 2016 and 2040 Massachusetts, without additional investment and policy changes, is projected to lose



Crisis for agriculture in Massachusetts

Land and climate

- Land prices have risen significantly
- Losing land to competing land uses
- Climate change is exacerbating extreme weather impacts

Economics

- Food system economics favor larger scale farms in other areas
- High input costs so average cost of production is greater than the value of goods produced
 - *Average farm earned 95 cents for every dollar spent on production in 2022*

People and systems

- Farmer population is aging and many do not have plan for after they step away
 - *40% of MA producers are 65 or older in 2022 and most have not identified who will carry on the farm's work*
- Lack of comprehensive statewide land-use planning with clear goals for farmland protection
- Historic and current inequities in accessing farmland

Funding available to farmers

Division of Agricultural Conservation
and Technical Assistance

Land Use Programs



**Agricultural Land
Protection**



**Farm Viability
Programs**



**Renewable Energy/
Energy Efficiency**



**Environmental
Protection and
Climate Resiliency**



Food Safety



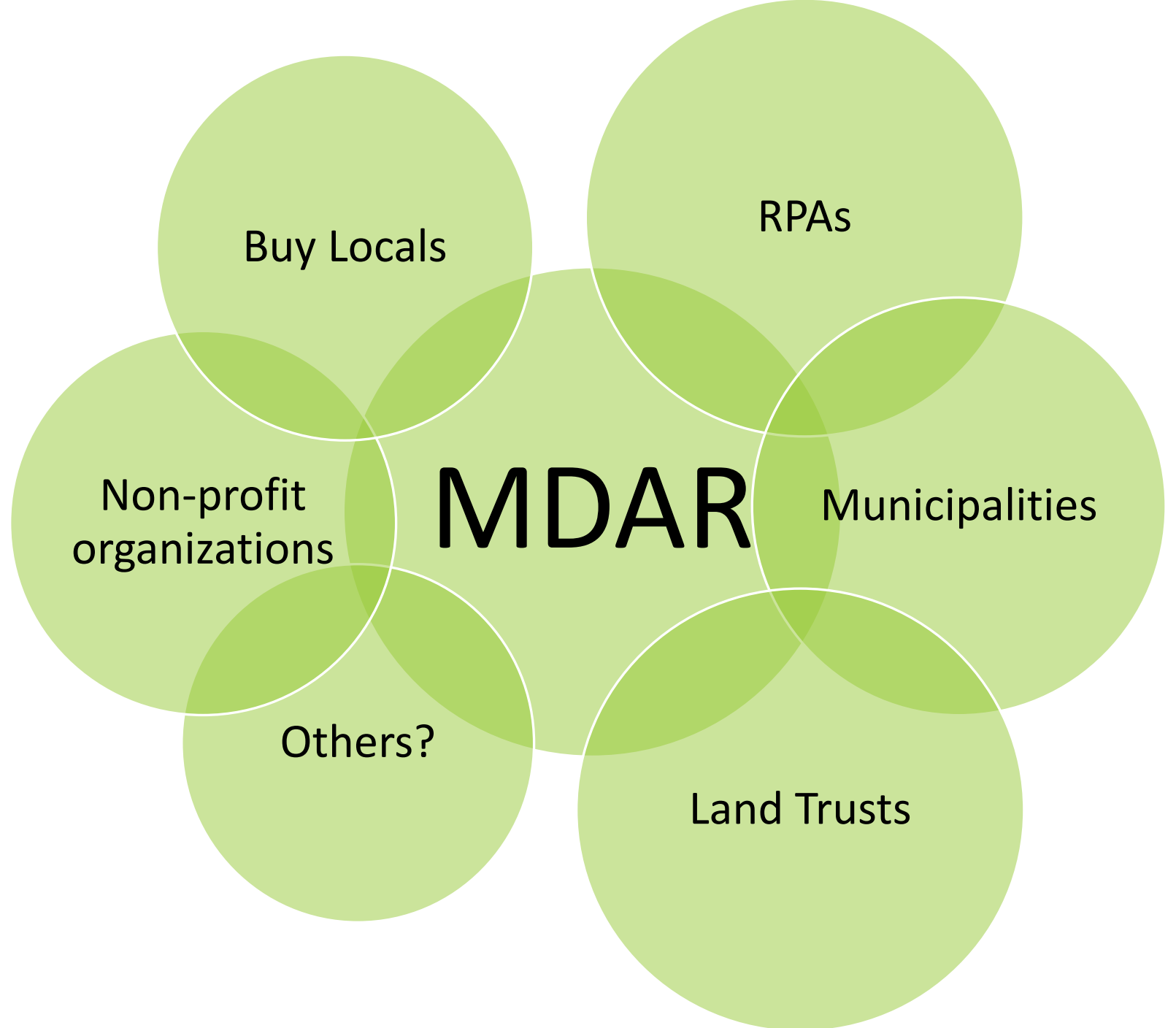
**Urban Agriculture/
Food Systems**

How can MDAR work more with local partners?

Important for implementing the Farmland Action Plan!

Some existing relationships

Some relationships need to be built



What is the Plan?

- State funded
- State coordinated
- Long range strategic initiative
- Statewide, not just for state government
- www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

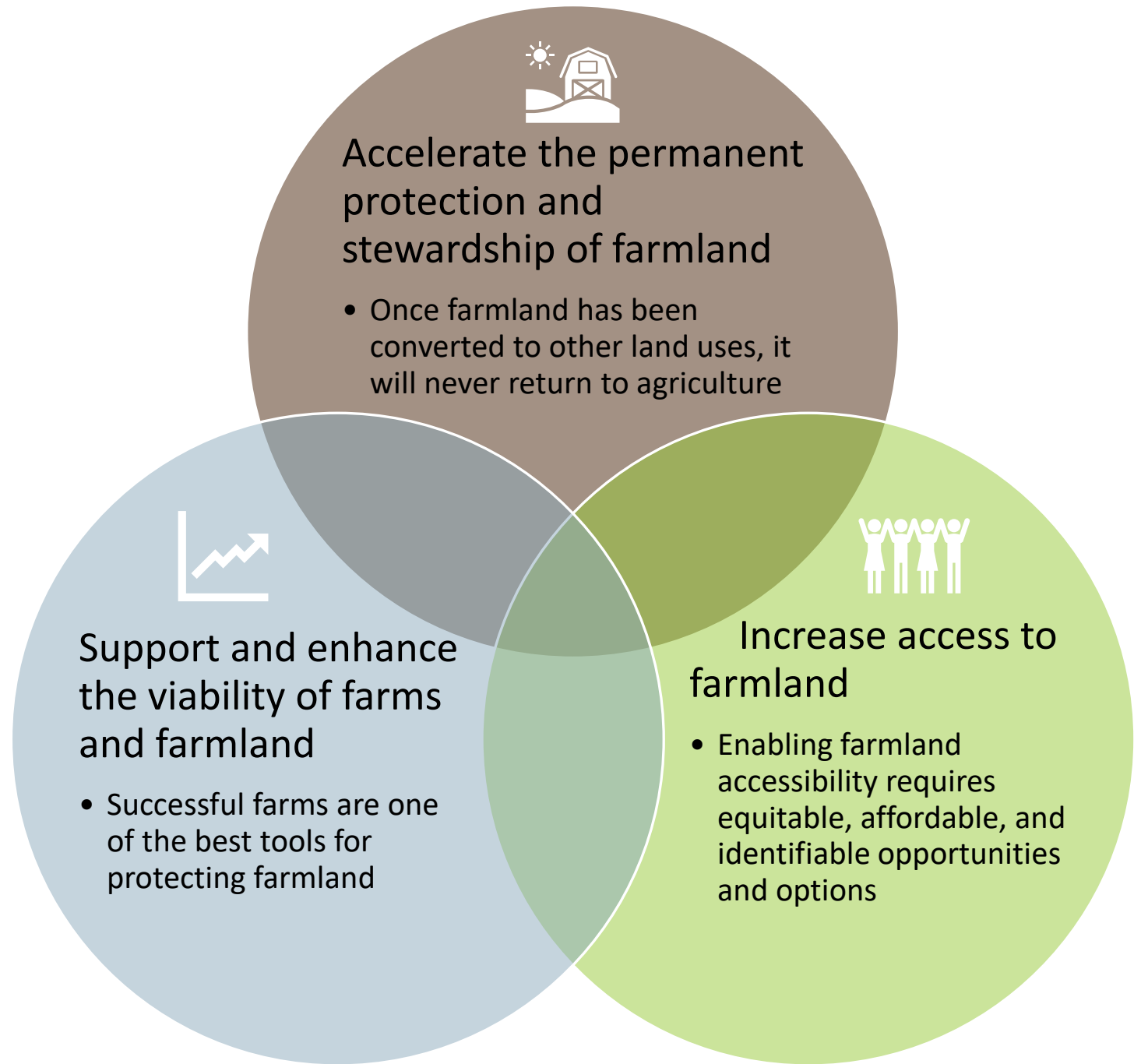


MASSACHUSETTS FARMLAND ACTION PLAN 2023–2050

What are the goals of the Farmland Action Plan?

Three overlapping goals:

- Protection
- Access
- Viability



Overview of the matrix

Goals – what the plan hopes to achieve.

Strategy – clarify what aspects of each Goal will be addressed

Action – direct how each strategy will be advanced

Task – details on how each action will be achieved

4-digit unique ID number



Strategies for each goal



Protection

- A. Permanently protect farmland through purchases of agricultural restrictions
- B. Further develop and implement additional tools to avoid farmland loss and retain farmland
- C. Prioritize protection of whole farms
- D. Formalize and integrate decision-making processes regarding farmland protection



Access

- A. Make more land available for agriculture**
- B. Support farm transfer and succession in ways that enhance access to farmland**
- C. Prioritize increased access for BIPOC and historically underserved farmers in all farmland access programs and policies
- D. Support and expand service-provider networks to meet the needs of all farmers and potential farmers.



Viability

- A. Ensure that laws, regulations, programs, and investments support farm viability**
- B. Grow resilience and sustainability practices on farms
- C. Increase use of services, programs, and other resources by farmers**



All goals

- A. Implement the Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan
- B. Build public support for agriculture and for farmland protection, access and viability

Bold = areas of particular interest for Buy Locals

Starting to implement the Farmland Action Plan



Protect and steward land

- Modify how farms are evaluated for protection
- Encourage municipalities to adopt Farmlands of Local Importance (FLI)



Access to farmland

- New state land licenses adjusted to prioritize use by historically underserved farmers (beginning, BIPOC, veterans, limited resource)



Viability of farms and farmland

- New Farm-Pass program to assist farmers to plan on how to pass their farm to the next generation, that results in a farm transfer plan.



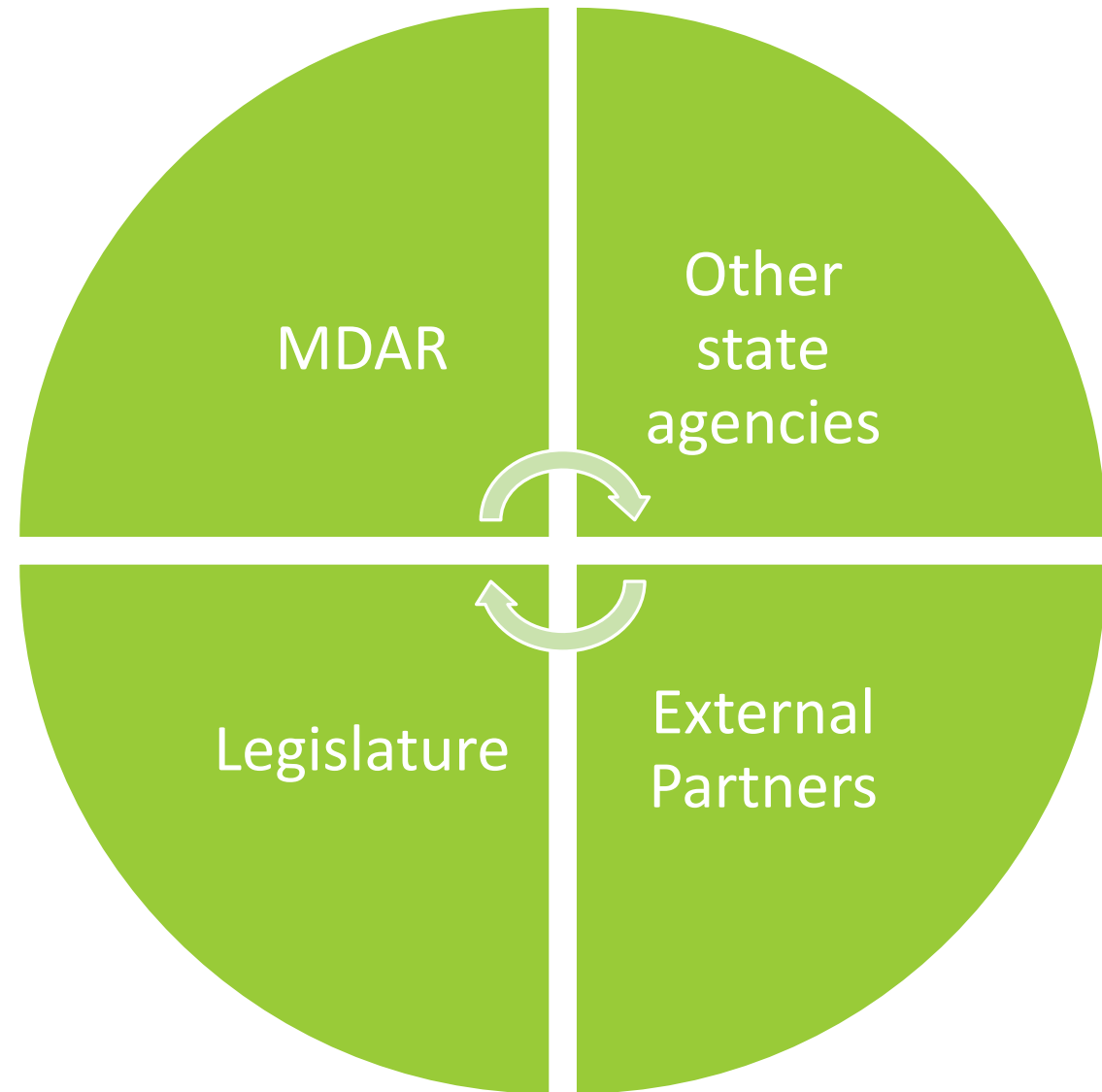
General

- Hire Farmland Action Plan Coordinator
- Refine Implementation Matrix

Who will implement the Plan?

This is a plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

- **MDAR** is promoting, monitoring and facilitating implementation of the Plan, building momentum from existing programs and initiatives.
- It is an integral part of the Commonwealth's climate and natural resources initiatives being implemented by **other state agencies**.
- **External partners** include non-profits, municipalities, RPAs, land trusts, federal agencies, educational institutions, private entities and others.
- The plan also identifies opportunities for the **legislature** to make policy and fiscal choices to support farmland goals



How could Buy Locals get involved?



Goal - Accelerate the permanent protection and stewardship of farmland

A. Permanently protect farmland through purchases of agricultural restrictions

- Creative financing mechanisms and strategies
- Federal funding
- Additional financial resources
- Prevent conversion
- Build capacity and coordinate
- Long term protection
- Short term covenants
- Stewardship
- Education and engagement

B. Further develop and implement additional tools to avoid farmland loss and retain farmland

- No net loss
- 61a
- CPA
- Underserved access
- State lands
- Solar development
- Zoning & Smart Growth

C. Prioritize protection of whole farms

- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Other land
- Other tenure models
- Funding
- Ecosystem services

D. Formalize and integrate decision-making processes regarding farmland protection

- Agricultural suitability



Protection related actions and tasks

Increase awareness and understanding of permanent protection options including APR, ALE, and non-ALE protection programs (Action I.A.11)

- Develop and implement a program to train municipalities on the economic, food security, and other benefits of farmland to help them understand the details of Chapter 61A ROFR, and to encourage them to exercise their rights or assign them to nonprofits. (Task 1063)



Goal – Increase access to farmland

A. Make more land available for agriculture

- Agricultural suitability
- State land licensing
- Urban agriculture
- Private leases
- Tribal lands
- Farmland Restoration
- Conservation Restrictions
- Farm Incubators

B. Support farm transfer and succession in ways that enhance access to farmland

- Education and technical assistance
- Protected lands
- Registries

C. Prioritize increased access for BIPOC and historically underserved farmers in all farmland access programs and policies

- Programs and policies
- Prioritization and accessibility

D. Support and expand service-provider networks to meet the needs of all farmers and potential farmers.

- Diversification
- DEI training
- Business technical assistance
- Capacity building
- Resource toolbox
- Land search



Publicly held land for agriculture and food production

Assess all existing, publicly held land for its suitability for agriculture and make more of it available for agriculture (Action II.A.1)

- Work with state agencies and departments, and municipalities to identify and publicly list all publicly owned land that is either in current agricultural production or suitable for agricultural production. Consider each parcel for inclusion in the farmland licensing program. (Task 1157)
- Support municipalities in developing their own farmland licensing agreements and plans. (Task 1162)
- Explore case studies to share best practices for food production assessment/ planning (Task 1161)
- Create a pilot to test and refine how to roll out food production assessment/ planning in urban environments (Task 1163)
- Create a pilot to test and refine how to roll out food production assessment/ planning in rural environments (Task 1164)
- Establish a process for negotiating agreements for agricultural use on parcels with public landholding agencies and jurisdictions. (Task 1165)



Education and Technical Assistance

Support and expand farmland transfer and farmland succession education and one-to-one technical assistance (TA) (Action II.B.1)

- Disseminate information to farmers on estate/transfer planning models, case studies, and best practices. (Task 1203)
- Provide technical assistance (TA) to applicants in completing program applications through NGOs non-profits and other TA organizations. (Task 1234)

Create a comprehensive toolbox of resources for farm business, succession, transfer planning, and implementation that is maintained and kept up to date, and provide these resources to farmers, which may require additional staff resources. (Action II.D.5)

- No tasks currently identified

Strengthen the state land licensing program (Action II.A.2)

- Connect licensees with services and support organizations, such as Buy Locals, UMass Extension, NRCS, business and succession planning-technical assistance providers, lenders, and others. (Task 1179)



Other access related actions and tasks

Explore options to expand and strengthen equity and diversity criteria for applications for agricultural use of public land, and prioritize access for historically underserved, new, aspiring, and low-income farmers. (Action II.C.2)

- Engage with local organizations to determine the farmland needs of a community and when conducting outreach and publicizing availability of farmland. (Task 1237)

Increase the amount of privately leased farmland, coupled with agreements designed to meet the needs of farmers. (Action II.A.4)

- Explore novel, alternative methods of land tenure to meet the needs of beginning, BIPOC, and other historically underserved communities with limited equity or credit. (Task 1192)
- Establish novel, alternative methods of land tenure to meet the needs of beginning, BIPOC, and other historically underserved communities with limited equity or credit. (Task 1193)



Goal - Support and enhance the viability of farms and farmland

A. Ensure that laws, regulations, programs, and investments support farm viability

- APR Program flexibility
- Right to Farm Bylaws and Ag Comms
- Grants and financing
- Local taxation, policy and regulations
- Decision making
- Support industries
- Urban agriculture
- Farm infrastructure
- Service providers
- Financial facilitation

B. Grow resilience and sustainability practices on farms

- Climate change technical assistance
- Soils on public lands
- Non-market contributions
- UMass Extension

C. Increase use of services, programs, and other resources by farmers

- Strategic outreach
- Technical assistance
- MDAR programs
- Education



Farmer outreach and support

Prompt further development of industries supportive of agriculture to ensure they serve farmer, farm and farmland issues fully. (Action III.A.6)

- Support workforce development, networking, and coordination of a next generation of farm succession and farm business advisors. (Task 1298)
- Develop program to engage with aspiring/beginning farmers, through NGOs non-profits, USDA, Extension, MDAR, UMass Student Farm, K-12 programs, and other stakeholders. (Task 1302)
- Support and encourage organizations and programs that support the health and welfare of farmers and farm workers, including mental health and physical health. (Task 1407)

Make it easier for farmers to seek and obtain grants and financing. (Action II.A.3)

- Provide more technical assistance to assist farmers with compiling grant applications and increase interest in grants from a broader range of farmers (Task 1262)



More farmer outreach and support

Develop and implement a strategic outreach and education communications plan to promote public and private resources available to farmers. (Action III.C.1)

- Work with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, municipal organizations, regional planning agencies, Buy Local organizations, and state agencies to develop outreach material with uniform messaging that can be utilized by all entities. (Task 1344)
- Develop online and print materials for outreach to landowners. Ensure that publications like Land Conservation Options: A Guide for Massachusetts Landowners and Your Land, Your Legacy are kept up to date and easily available digitally and in hardcopy. (Task 1345)

III.B.1 - Increase TA technical assistance to farmers around crop- and livestock-specific climate change adaptation strategies.



Supporting all the goals

Hire Farmland Action Plan Coordinator

Implement the Farmland Action Plan

- Encourage partners and partnerships that can implement the plan.
- Support BIPOC and other historically underserved farmers and organizations involvement.
- Monitor and report on the impact of farmland programs to demonstrate the success, inform changes, and identify needs.
- Map and track farmland (APRs, CRs, Chapter 61A, and more).
- Research and report on agricultural incentive models used in other states and countries.

Build public support for agriculture and for farmland protection, access and viability

- Education and outreach for residents and elected officials
- Comprehensive plan



Educate public and local officials

Develop programming to educate all Massachusetts residents and elected officials about the importance of local agriculture. (Action All.B.1)

- Through media and other public outreach, educate the public about the value of local agriculture and how they can support it through consumer spending and advocacy. Highlight local agriculture's connections to food security, public health, the economy, the environment, equity, culture, and other sectors. (Task 1370)

Discussion

40 minutes

8 Slides

Approx 5 minutes for each



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Thoughts and questions?

- Do you agree with the tasks being a good fit for Buy Locals?
- To what extent are you already doing this work? Or are there initiatives this can build off?
- Any other thoughts?



Education and Technical Assistance

Support and expand farmland transfer and farmland succession education and one-to-one technical assistance (TA) (Action II.B.1)

- Disseminate information to farmers on estate/transfer planning models, case studies, and best practices. (Task 1203)
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Create a comprehensive toolbox of resources for farm business, succession, transfer planning, and implementation that is maintained and kept up to date, and provide these resources to farmers, which may require additional staff resources. (Action II.D.5)

- No tasks currently identified

Strengthen the state land licensing program (Action II.A.2)

- Connect licensees with services and support organizations, such as Buy Locals, UMass Extension, NRCS, business and succession planning-technical assistance providers, lenders, and others. (Task 1179)

Thoughts and questions?

- Do you agree with the tasks being a good fit for Buy Locals?
- To what extent are you already doing this work? Or are there initiatives this can build off?
- For the toolbox action, are there any tasks that might fit Buy Local's expertise that could help advance this task?
- Any other thoughts?



Other access related actions and tasks

Explore options to expand and strengthen equity and diversity criteria for applications for agricultural use of public land, and prioritize access for historically underserved, new, aspiring, and low-income farmers. (Action II.C.2)

- Engage with local organizations to determine the farmland needs of a community and when conducting outreach and publicizing availability of farmland. (Task 1237)

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Prompt further development of industries supportive of agriculture to ensure they serve farmer, farm and farmland issues fully. (Action III.A.6)

- Support workforce development, networking, and coordination of a next generation of farm succession and farm business advisors. (Task 1298)
- Develop program to engage with aspiring/beginning farmers, through NGOs non-profits, USDA, Extension, MDAR, UMass Student Farm, K-12 programs, and other stakeholders. (Task 1302)
- Support and encourage organizations and programs that support the health and welfare of farmers and farm workers, including mental health and physical health. (Task 1407)

Make it easier for farmers to seek and obtain grants and financing. (Action II.A.3)

- Provide more technical assistance to assist farmers with compiling grant applications and increase interest in grants from a broader range of farmers (Task 1262)

Thoughts and questions?

- Do you agree with the tasks being a good fit for Buy Locals?
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More farmer outreach and support

Develop and implement a strategic outreach and education communications plan to promote public and private resources available to farmers. (Action III.C.1)

- Work with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, municipal organizations, regional planning agencies, Buy Local organizations, and state agencies to develop outreach material with uniform messaging that can be utilized by all entities. (Task 1344)
- Develop online and print materials for outreach to landowners. Ensure that publications like Land Conservation Options: A Guide for Massachusetts Landowners and Your Land, Your Legacy are kept up to date and easily available digitally and in hardcopy. (Task 1345)

Increase TA technical assistance to farmers around crop- and livestock-specific climate change adaptation strategies. (Action III.B.1)

Thoughts and questions?

- Do you agree with the tasks being a good fit for Buy Locals?
- To what extent are you already doing this work? Or are there initiatives this can build off?
- For Action III.B.1 is there a particular task Buy Locals would like under this? Existing tasks include:
 - Create a program to support farmers with technical assistance around crop- and livestock-specific climate change adaptation strategies. (Task 1425)
 - Continue to support the Climate Smart Program (Task 1426)
- Any other thoughts?



Educate public and local officials

Develop programming to educate all Massachusetts residents and elected officials about the importance of local agriculture. (Action All.B.1)

- Through media and other public outreach, educate the public about the value of local agriculture and how they can support it through consumer spending and advocacy. Highlight local agriculture's connections to food security, public health, the economy, the environment, equity, culture, and other sectors. (Task 1370)

Thoughts and questions?

- Do you agree with the tasks being a good fit for Buy Locals?
- To what extent are you already doing this work? Or are there initiatives this can build off?
- Any other thoughts?



Equity and EJ

- Do you have have Equity and EJ initiatives that could be adapted to also include farming and farmland?
- Do you reimburse Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and participants, directly or indirectly, for some or all of your programs?
- Any other thoughts?



Protection related actions and tasks

Increase awareness and understanding of permanent protection options including APR, ALE, and non-ALE protection programs (Action I.A.11)

- Develop and implement a program to train municipalities on the economic, food security, and other benefits of farmland to help them understand the details of Chapter 61A ROFR, and to encourage them to exercise their rights or assign them to nonprofits. (Task 1063)

Thoughts and questions?

- Do you agree with the tasks being a good fit for Buy Locals?
- To what extent are you already doing this work? Or are there initiatives this can build off?
- Any other thoughts?

Next steps

Next steps

- Katharine to share notes from today's discussion
- Homework – due by October 4th
Review matrix to see if
 - There are other activities you might be interested to get involved in
 - You have any additional suggestions for new or revised tasks
- Invite Katharine to attend local events and meetings

Give quick preview of matrix if time

More information and questions

- katharine.s.otto@mass.gov 413-544-2400
- www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

